

PURCELL
THE FAIRY QUEEN

Les Arts Florissants
William Christie

HENRY PURCELL (1659-1695)

The Fairy Queen

CD1

First Musick

- | | | | |
|---|--|-------------|------|
| 1 | | 1. Prelude | 1'30 |
| 2 | | 2. Hornpipe | 0'50 |

Second Musick

- | | | | |
|---|--|-------------|------|
| 3 | | 3. Air | 0'58 |
| 4 | | 4. Rondeau | 1'40 |
| 5 | | 5. Overture | 1'25 |

ACT I

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|------|
| 6 | | 6. Duet: <i>Come, let us leave the town</i> | 1'43 |
| 7 | | 7. Scene of the Drunken Poet: <i>Fill up the bowl</i> | 6'00 |
| 8 | | 8. First Act Tune: Jig | 1'03 |

ACT II

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|------|
| 9 | | 9. Come all ye songsters | 2'30 |
| 10 | | 10. Prelude | 1'20 |
| 11 | | 11. Chorus: <i>May the God of Wit inspire</i> | 2'25 |
| | | 12. Echo | |
| 12 | | 13. Chorus: <i>Now join your warbling voices all, Sing while we trip it</i>
Dance of Fairies | 2'53 |
| 13 | | 14. Entrance of Night: <i>See, even Night herself is here</i> | 4'48 |
| 14 | | 15. Entrance of Mystery: <i>I am come to lock all fast</i> | 0'52 |
| 15 | | 16. Entrance of Secrecy: <i>One charming night gives more delight</i> | 2'22 |
| 16 | | 17. Entrance of Sleep: <i>Hush, no more</i> | 5'02 |
| 17 | | 18. Dance for the followers of Night | 1'22 |
| 18 | | 19. Second Act Tune: Air | 1'25 |

ACT III

19		20. <i>If love's a sweet passion</i>	5'15
20		21. Symphony while the swans come forward	1'30
21		22. Dance for the Fairies	0'45
22		23. Dance for the Green Men	1'45
23		24. <i>Ye gentle spirits of the air</i>	5'00
24		25. Dialogue between Coridon and Mopsa	3'30
25		26. <i>When I have often heard young maids complaining</i>	2'00
26		27. Dance for the Haymakers	0'50
27		28. <i>A thousand, thousand ways</i>	2'13
28		29. Third Act Tune: Hornpipe	0'50

CD2

ACT IV

1		30. Symphony	6'25
2		31. <i>Now the night is chased away</i>	3'15
		32. <i>Let the Fifes and the Clarions</i>	
3		33. Entry of Phoebus	0'35
4		34. <i>When a cruel long winter</i>	5'02
		35. Chorus: <i>Hail! great parent of us all</i>	
5		36. Spring: <i>Thus the ever grateful Spring</i>	2'13
6		37. Summer: <i>Here's the Summer, sprightly, gay</i>	1'30
7		38. Autumn: <i>See, see my many colour'd fields</i>	2'40
8		39. Winter: <i>Next Winter comes slowly</i>	3'38
9		40. Fourth Act Tune: Air	1'02

ACT V

10		41. Prelude	1'10
11		42. Juno: <i>Thrice happy lovers</i>	2'50
12		43. The Plaint: <i>O let me weep!</i>	8'15
13		44. Entry Dance	1'25
14		45. Symphony	1'00
15		46. A Chinese Man: <i>Thus the gloomy world</i>	4'05
16		47. Chinese Woman: <i>Thus happy and free</i>	0'45
17		48. Chinese Man: <i>Yes, Daphne</i>	1'50
18		49. Monkeys' Dance	0'53
19		50. <i>Hark! how all things with one sound rejoice</i>	2'05
20		51. <i>Hark! the echoing air a triumph sings</i>	2'30
21		52. <i>Sure the dull God of Marriage does not hear</i>	2'30
22		53. Prelude	1'47
		54. Hymen: <i>See, I obey</i>	
23		55. <i>Turn then thine eyes</i>	0'40
24		56. Hymen: <i>My torch indeed will from such brightness shine</i>	0'45
25		57. <i>They shall be as happy as they are fait</i>	0'50
26		58. Chaconne	2'40
27		59. <i>They shall be as happy as they are fair</i>	0'50

Les Arts Florissants

Sopranos	<i>Nancy Argenta, Lynne Dawson, Isabelle Desrochers, Willemijn Van Gent Véronique Gens, Sandrine Piau, Noémi Rime</i>
Hautes-contre	<i>Charles Daniels, Jean-Paul Fouchécourt, Mark Le Brocq, Christophe le Paludier</i>
Ténors	<i>Bernard Loonen, François Piolino, Thomas Randle</i>
Baryton	<i>François Bazola</i>
Basses	<i>Jérôme Correas, George Banks-Martin, Bernard Deletré Thomas Lander, Richard Taylor</i>
Violons	<i>Ryo Terakado, Myriam Gevers, Catherine Girard, Thérèse Gipfer, Michio Kondo Frédéric Martin, Guya Martinini, Michèle Sauvé, George Willms</i>
Alti	<i>Christine Angot, Mutsumi Otsu, Benoît Weeger</i>
Violoncelles	<i>David Simpson, Bruno Cocset, Elisabeth Matiffa</i>
Contrebasse	<i>Jonathan Cable</i>
Flûtes à bec	<i>Hugo Reyne, Jean-Pierre Nicolas</i>
Hautbois	<i>Frank de Bruine, Claire Michèle</i>
Bassons	<i>David Mings, Kate van Orden</i>
Trompettes	<i>Susan Williams, Graham Nicholson</i>
Percussions	<i>Marie-Ange Petit</i>
	<i>Continuo</i>
Théorbe	<i>Eric Bellocq</i>
Guitare baroque et théorbe	<i>Mike Fentross</i>
Violoncelle	<i>David Simpson</i>
Viole de gambe	<i>Anne-Marie Lasla</i>
Clavecins	<i>Christophe Rousset, Noam Krieger</i>
Orgue	<i>Christophe Rousset</i>
Direction	<i>William Christie</i>

Henry Purcell et l'opéra anglais du XVII^e siècle

Henry Purcell fut le premier grand compositeur d'opéra en Angleterre. En fait, cette forme nouvelle d'art théâtral qui avait mûri en Italie et en France pendant le début du XVII^e siècle, n'avait atteint l'Angleterre qu'à l'époque où Purcell était encore tout jeune écolier. Il était né en 1659, moins d'un an avant la restauration de Charles II sur le trône d'Angleterre, après la chute de la république de Cromwell. La vie avait recommencé à prospérer au retour du roi à Londres et Purcell aurait difficilement pu bénéficier d'une meilleure période pour s'épanouir. Les institutions qui avaient été abolies par les Puritains furent rétablies, et particulièrement les activités de la Cour et des théâtres publics. Le drame parlé avait été très populaire en Angleterre pendant des siècles et il était de tradition que seules les compagnies d'acteurs professionnels aient le droit de donner des représentations en public. À la restauration, le roi Charles autorisa deux compagnies théâtrales à Londres : celle du roi et celle du duc d'York, qui devaient avoir dans le courant du siècle une grande influence sur la scène anglaise, particulièrement sur l'opéra.

En 1674 – Purcell avait quinze ans –, fut donné le premier opéra à Londres. Jusqu'alors, la scène avait été complètement dominée par le drame parlé : les Anglais purent alors mesurer les progrès du théâtre musical sur le continent. La Cour célébrait le mariage du duc d'York avec la princesse Marie de Modène, et un opéra français fut monté à cette occasion. L'œuvre s'appelait *Ariane ou le Mariage de Bacchus*. Le livret était de Pierre Perrin, et la musique avait été écrite par un Français expatrié, Louis Grabu, l'un des musiciens de la Cour du roi Charles. Le roi avait vu quelques opéras italiens présentés à la Cour française pendant ses années d'exil. Mais depuis lors, l'opéra en France avait fait un pas en avant. L'opéra italien n'y était pas apprécié et Louis XIV avait établi une institution dont la fonction était de présenter les opéras français, l'Académie Royale de Musique, qui était sous le contrôle de Lully. Des nouvelles concernant cette Académie avaient atteint l'Angleterre avec le musicien Robert Cambert, qui en avait été chargé à l'origine avant d'être évincé par l'ambitieux Lully. Cambert, ayant fui à Londres, aida Grabu à monter *Ariane*, en 1674.

Ironie du sort, les Anglais apprécèrent aussi peu l'opéra français que les Français l'italien, et *Ariane* ne fut pas bien accueillie. Mais avant que l'œuvre fût même présentée, un autre événement s'était produit,

qui devait avoir une grande importance pour l'opéra anglais. Quand les acteurs de la compagnie théâtrale du duc entendirent qu'un opéra français allait être monté, ils y virent une menace éventuelle pour leur prospérité, si ce genre d'œuvre devenait populaire à Londres. Ils montèrent un spectacle rival, *La Tempête* de Shakespeare ; pour la rendre bien plus attrayante, on la donna avec quelques épisodes nouveaux où la musique jouait un grand rôle, parmi de grands effets scéniques. Ce compromis d'une pièce avec scènes musicales spectaculaires combla l'idée que le public londonien se faisait d'un opéra. Contrairement à *Ariane*, *La Tempête* fut, dès 1674, un grand succès, et les œuvres de ce type devinrent la réponse anglaise à la menace d'un opéra étranger. Le triomphe de *La Tempête* établit un modèle pour la forme de l'opéra anglais pendant les trente années qui suivirent : jusqu'aux environs de 1700, presque tous les opéras montés à Londres étaient basés sur des pièces de théâtre existantes, auxquelles étaient ajoutés des épisodes musicaux et des effets scéniques très élaborés. Purcell put fort bien participer à cette représentation de *La Tempête*, puisqu'on y avait engagé quelques chanteurs de la Chapelle Royale dont il faisait partie.

À l'âge de vingt ans, Purcell composa la musique pour la pièce de John Dryden, *Theodosius*, montée en 1680. Le succès fut vif et Purcell continua à écrire de la musique pour le théâtre tout au long de sa brève existence. En 1689, on lui demanda d'écrire un opéra pour les élèves d'une institution de jeunes filles, et il s'attaqua à *Dido and Aeneas*, son premier et unique opéra entièrement musical. Le succès de cette œuvre encouragea la *United Company* à monter de nouveaux spectacles, mais en revenant au principe du semi-opéra qui était moins onéreux et surtout correspondait parfaitement au goût des Londoniens. Ainsi, en 1690 puis 1691, Purcell composa *Dioclesian* puis *King Arthur*, avec lesquels son succès fut grand. Il fut reconnu comme le compositeur le plus important en Angleterre et les acteurs se rendirent compte que ses opéras attiraient le public. Ils prévirent donc une production encore plus splendide pour l'année suivante – production si onéreuse, en fait, qu'elle dut être montée en 1692 et 1693 pour couvrir les frais de sa présentation. C'était le quatrième opéra de Purcell, le plus élaboré, *The Fairy Queen* ("La Reine des Fées") et il devait connaître le plus grand succès de la carrière du musicien. Le dernier opéra de Purcell, *The Indian Queen* ("La Reine indienne") ne bénéficia, comparativement aux précédentes, que d'une production réduite. Six mois après que l'œuvre a été présentée, Purcell tomba malade et mourut soudain en novembre 1695.

Le livret et la musique de *The Fairy Queen*

The Fairy Queen fut donné pour la première fois au Queen's Theatre, à Dorset Gardens, à Londres, le 2 mai 1692. Le texte de l'opéra était basé sur la comédie de Shakespeare *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été*. Cette pièce fort célèbre avait près d'un siècle d'âge : le texte en fut donc altéré et remis au goût du jour pour *La Reine des Fées*. En particulier, l'œuvre fut abrégée pour permettre l'introduction des scènes musicales. À l'occasion de ces altérations, certains passages du matériau d'origine furent déplacés dans le déroulement de l'action tandis que d'autres étaient simplement abandonnés.

Shakespeare écrivit le *Songe* vers 1595 pour être donné lors d'un mariage. Afin de lier la pièce aux événements en question, il la construisit autour des noces de Thésée avec Hippolyte, reine des Amazones, qui formaient le thème de base de l'intrigue. Comme *The Fairy Queen* n'était pas destinée à fêter un mariage en 1692, l'auteur anonyme qui adapta la pièce coupa toute référence aux noces de Thésée et abandonna le personnage d'Hippolyte. Dans l'opéra, Thésée est connu simplement comme *le Duc* et son rôle est beaucoup plus réduit que dans la pièce. Ce qui intéressait l'auteur de *La Reine des Fées*, c'était l'ensemble des autres personnages du *Songe*.

Une tradition du théâtre anglais du XVII^e siècle voulait que les rôles principaux d'une pièce ne jouent jamais de musique. Une autre voulait que la musique ne pût être associée au théâtre qu'à l'occasion de scènes particulières : représentation d'offices religieux (dieux païens de la Grèce et de Rome), scènes faisant intervenir des caractères surnaturels dans l'action, comme les fantômes, sorcières et fées. L'élément féérique dans le *Songe* incita l'adaptateur de *La Reine des Fées* à choisir cette pièce pour son opéra, et ce sont les fées qui introduisent toutes les scènes musicales. Dans la version mise en scène en 1692, la musique de *The Fairy Queen* prenait la forme de quatre *masques* séparés, chacun avec un ensemble de caractères différents qui représentaient les événements appropriés, naturels ou symboliques, à la place où ils étaient introduits dans l'histoire. Le premier acte était la seule section de l'opéra qui ne contenait pas de musique. Le premier masque arrivait à l'acte II quand les esprits de la Nuit, du Mystère, du Secret et du Sommeil entrent en scène et chantent pour endormir Titania après les divertissements féériques. Le masque du troisième acte devait montrer la folie de Titania amoureuse de l'âne. Après un chant commentant les peines et les joies de l'amour, survient

l'interlude comique des deux paysans faneurs, Corydon et Mopsa, où la partie féminine est chantée par un homme déguisé en femme.

À l'acte IV, la musique intervient quand Titania et Obéron se sont réconciliés après leur querelle. Titania fait appel à Phoebus, dieu du Soleil, et aux Quatre Saisons. Cet épisode entend symboliser le fait que, comme le soleil fait suivre aux saisons leur ordre naturel, les relations entre Titania et Obéron se sont rétablies dans leur équilibre propre. Cette situation tournante se reflète dans la scène musicale de l'acte V, qui est probablement le plus intéressant des ajouts à l'œuvre. La scène du masque se situe dans un jardin chinois où un homme et une femme chantent l'état parfait du monde avant que l'humanité ne commence à s'intéresser à l'ambition, à la gloire, aux abus du commerce et à l'avidité. En d'autres termes, elle représente une sorte de paradis tel qu'Adam et Ève devaient l'avoir connu au jardin d'Éden. Pour les Anglais du XVII^e siècle, un pays aussi éloigné d'eux que la Chine apparaissait comme devant avoir une société toute différente de celle d'Europe, partie du monde ravagée par les guerres. Dans ce sens, ce masque symbolisait l'état parfait de société et de mariage, plutôt qu'une scène spécifiquement exotique. L'épisode chinois est ainsi précédé de l'apparition de Junon, reine des dieux, et complétée par l'arrivée d'Hymen, dieu du mariage, qui vient bénir les amants et conduit l'opéra à sa fin.

Le succès de *The Fairy Queen* en 1692 fut important, mais sa réalisation avait coûté fort cher. La *United Company* la présenta à nouveau en 1693 avec quelques pages de musique ajoutées. Le présent enregistrement tient compte de cette version. Deux airs furent incorporés – l'un dans le *masque* de l'acte III, "Ye gentle spirits of the air", et l'autre à l'acte V, "O let me ever, ever weep", bien que ces airs n'aient rien à faire avec l'action de ces masques. Fait plus significatif encore : une scène musicale fut ajoutée au premier acte qui n'en contenait pas à l'origine. La première scène de l'œuvre – entre le Duc, Égée et les amants – fut abandonnée pour arranger ce nouvel épisode, et l'histoire fut ainsi privée de son commencement... Ceci laisse à penser que le public était si familiarisé avec l'œuvre en 1693 que cette suppression paraissait sans importance, même si l'histoire perdait toute cohérence. La nouvelle scène musicale rapporte la découverte par les nymphes des trois poètes ivres dans la forêt. Les fées tourmentent ces mortels avant de les chasser pour qu'ils aillent plus loin cuver, en dormant, leur ivrognerie.

L'opéra nécessitait un grand nombre d'interprètes, car il comprenait seize rôles parlants et, dans les scènes musicales, un grand nombre de chanteurs et de danseurs. Pourtant, la principale source de dépenses fut provoquée par les costumes et les effets scéniques utilisés dans les masques. Il faut noter que les décors utilisés pour ces épisodes n'avaient pas de rapport avec ceux de la pièce. La majeure partie de la pièce se déroule en effet dans la forêt proche d'Athènes, mais avant chaque masque, la scène changeait pour montrer un décor peint très élaboré – comme un jardin à la française avec statues et fontaines, ou une belle rivière avec rangée d'arbres sur ses rives et cygnes sur ses eaux. En particulier, la scène chinoise résume l'attitude adoptée pour imaginer ces splendides décorations – c'étaient des peintures idéalisées de l'endroit où seules des créatures surnaturelles, fées ou apparitions de la société idéale, auraient pu vivre...

L'accompagnement est composé pour un orchestre théâtral typique de l'époque : principalement des cordes soutenues par le continuo. À divers endroits, Purcell ajoute aussi des bassons, des hautbois, des flûtes à bec et des trompettes pour varier la couleur sonore.

Il était d'usage, du temps de Purcell, de donner de la musique pendant que le public s'installait dans le théâtre. Cette musique consistait souvent en des pièces populaires en forme de danses. Elle était jouée en deux groupes, et pour cette raison, on mentionnait *The First Musick* et *The Second Musick*. De plus, au lieu de baisser le rideau de scène entre les actes, d'autres intermèdes musicaux étaient donnés, connus sous le nom de *Act Tunes*.

D'après JOHN BUTTREY

Henry Purcell and English opera in the seventeenth century

Henry Purcell was the first great composer of English opera. In fact, this new form of theatrical art, which had been developing in Italy and in France since the beginning of the seventeenth century, had only reached England during the period when Purcell was as yet but a young schoolboy. He was born in 1659, less than a year before the restoration of Charles II to the English throne, after the collapse of Cromwell's republic. Life had begun to prosper again with the return of the King to London, and Purcell could scarcely have enjoyed a better time for the flowering of his talents. Institutions which had been abolished by the Puritans were to be re-established, especially court activities and public theatres. Spoken drama had been very popular in England for several centuries, and the tradition had grown up that only companies of professional actors were granted the right to present public performances. At the Restoration, King Charles authorised two theatrical companies in London – that of the King and that of the Duke of York – and they were to have a great influence upon the English scene, particularly on opera, later in the century.

In 1674, when Purcell was fifteen, the first opera was given in London. Until then, the scene had been completely dominated by spoken drama; the English were to be able now to assess the progress of musical theatre on the continent. The court celebrated the marriage of the Duke of York to Princess Maria of Modena by mounting a French opera for the occasion. The work was called *Ariane, ou Le Mariage de Bacchus*. The libretto was by Pierre Perrin, and the music had been written by a French expatriate, Louis Grabu, one of Charles II's court musicians. The King had seen a number of Italian operas at the French court during his years in exile there. But since then, opera in France had not stood still. Italian opera was not appreciated there, and Louis XIV had established an institution whose function it was to present French operas, the Académie Royale de Musique, which was under the control of Lully. News of this Academy had been brought to England by the musician Robert Cambert, who had originally been in charge of it before being ousted by the ambitious Lully. Cambert, having fled to London, helped Grabu mount *Ariane* in 1674.

Ironically, the English appreciated French opera as little as the French did Italian, and *Ariane* was not very well received. But even before the work was presented, there occurred another event which was to have major importance for English opera. When the actors who formed the Duke of York's theatrical company heard that a French opera was to be produced, they viewed it as a potential menace to their own future prosperity, if this type of work should become popular in London. They staged a rival spectacle, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; but, to make it even more attractive, new episodes were added wherein music played a major part among lavish scenes of spectacle and special effects that fulfilled the London public's idea of what an opera should be. Unlike *Ariane*, *The Tempest* was a huge success, and works of this type – 'masques' – were to become the English response to the menace of foreign opera. The triumph of *The Tempest* established a model for the form of English opera for the next thirty years; until about 1700, almost all operas produced in London were based on existing plays with the addition of musical episodes and elaborate scenic effects. Purcell may well have taken part in this production of *The Tempest*, since several singers from the Chapel Royal, of which he was a member, had been engaged for the musical sections.

At the age of twenty Purcell composed the music for a play by John Dryden, *Theodosius*, produced in 1680. This was a great success, and he continued to write music for the theatre throughout the remainder of his short life. In 1689, he was asked to compose an opera for a girls' school, and he tackled the story of *Dido and Aeneas*, his first and his only wholly sung opera. The success of this work encouraged the United Company to turn its attentions once again to opera, but rather than a completely musical spectacle, it chose the form of semi-opera, which was less cumbersome and above all, entirely to the taste of the London public. So it was that in 1690 Purcell composed *Dioclesian*, then, in 1691, *King Arthur*; both productions met with overwhelming success.

Purcell was now recognised as the leading English composer, and the actors realised that his operas possessed the power to attract the public. They planned an even more splendid production for the following year – a production so demanding, in fact, that it would have to be staged in both 1692 and 1693 just to cover the costs of its presentation. This was Purcell's fourth opera, and his most elaborate – *The Fairy Queen*, destined to become the greatest success of his musical career.

Purcell's last opera, *The Indian Queen*, was produced much less lavishly (compared with its predecessors) and suffered somewhat in consequence. The composer fell sick and died suddenly in November 1695.

The libretto and music of *The Fairy Queen*

The Fairy Queen was given for the first time at the Queen's Theatre, Dorset Garden, London, on 2 May 1692. Its text was based on an existing play, Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The celebrated model was now around a century old, and its text was altered to conform with the taste of the day for *The Fairy Queen*. In particular, the work was abridged to allow the introduction of musical scenes. When the alterations were made, certain scenes were placed in a different order, whilst others were simply dropped altogether. Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* around 1595 for performance at a wedding. To link it to that event, its plot was built around the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, which forms the basis of the plot. As *The Fairy Queen* was no longer intended to form part of marriage celebrations in 1692, the anonymous author who adapted the text deleted all reference to the nuptials of Theseus and abandoned the character of Hippolyta. In the opera, Theseus is known simply as 'The Duke', and his role is greatly reduced. The author of *The Fairy Queen* was far more interested in the play's other characters.

Seventeenth-century theatrical tradition in England dictated that the principal actors in a play should never perform music. It was also customary for music to be used in the theatre only in association with certain scenes – representations of religious rites to the pagan deities of Greece and Rome, love scenes (where the lovers might be allowed to sing), and scenes involving supernatural characters such as ghosts, witches, and fairies. It was the 'fairy' element in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that led the librettist to select this play for his opera, and it is the fairies that introduce all the musical scenes.

In the version of *The Fairy Queen* staged in 1692, the music takes the form of four separate masques, each with a cast of different characters representing the appropriate events, natural or symbolic, at the place where they are introduced in the story. The first act was the only section of the semi-opera

to contain no music at all. The first masque comes in Act Two, when the spirits of Night, Mystery, Secrecy, and Sleep enter and sing Titania to sleep after a series of fairy divertissements. The masque for Act Three depicts Titania's enchanted love for Bottom the Weaver (wearing an ass's head). After a song commenting on the delights and pains of love, there follows a comic interlude in the village wooing of two peasants, Corydon and Mopsa. In this superb piece of comedy, the part of Mopsa was originally sung by 'Mr Pate in woman's habit'.

In Act Four the music comes when Titania and Oberon are reconciled after their quarrel. Titania summons the sun god Phoebus and the Four Seasons, and an elaborate series of songs follows. The musical episode for Act Five is probably the most interesting of the additions to the original play. The setting for this masque is a Chinese garden, wherein a man and a woman – like an oriental Adam and Eve – sing of the delights of their Garden of Eden before mankind arrived to contaminate its beauty. In this masque, too, Juno, queen of the gods, arrives with Hymen, god of marriage, to bless the lovers and take the opera to its spectacular conclusion.

The Fairy Queen was a great success in 1692, but its production proved costly indeed. To recoup its outlay, the United Company presented it afresh the following year with new musical additions. The present recording includes these modifications. Two new airs were incorporated – one in the Act Three masque, 'Ye gentle spirits of the air', and one in Act Five, 'O let me ever, ever weep', although they have nothing whatever to do with the action. More significantly, a whole musical scene was added to Act I which did not appear in the original. The first scene of the actual play – the entrance of the Duke, Egeus, and the lovers – was deleted to make room for the new musical episode, and the story was thus deprived of its opening. This leads one to think that the public of 1693 was so familiar with Shakespeare's play that this omission appeared unimportant, even though the story now lost all coherence. The musical addition depicts the discovery by the fairies of three drunken poets in the forest. The fairies torment them before driving them away to let them sleep off their drunkenness.

The opera calls for a great many performers, including sixteen speaking roles and, in the musical scenes, a vast number of singers and dancers. However, the main reason for the cost of the production was undoubtedly the costumes and the scenic effects used in the masques. It should

be noted that the stage sets used in these episodes had nothing to do with the scenes in the play itself. The greater part of the play is supposed to take place in the woods near Athens, but before each masque the scene was changed to allow the staging of the most elaborate decor – such as a formal French garden with statues and fountains, or a beautiful river with rows of formal trees on its banks and swans floating majestically on its waters. The final Chinese scene, in particular, sums up the attitude of the designers – idealised imagining of oriental splendour, adjudged fitting for supernatural beings such as the fairies.

The accompaniment is scored for the typical theatre orchestra of the time, principally strings supported by the continuo. At different stages, Purcell adds bassoons, oboes, recorders, and/or trumpets to vary the instrumental colouring.

It was the custom in Purcell's time to perform music whilst the public was taking its seats in the theatre. This music often consisted of popular pieces in the shape of dances. It was played in two groups, and for this reason was entitled 'The First Musick' and 'The Second Musick'. Moreover, the curtain was not dropped between acts, and further musical interludes, known as Act Tunes, were given.

After a text by JOHN BUTTREY

The Fairy Queen

Opera in 5 acts

Libretto by an anonymous author after William Shakespeare's

A Midsummer Night's Dream

THE NAMES OF THE PERSONS

THE DUKE

EGEUS, father of Hermia

LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS, in love with Hermia

HERMIA, in love with Lysander

HELENA, in love with Demetrius

OBERON, King of the Fairies

TITANIA, the Fairy Queen

PUCK, Robin-Goodfellow

FAIRIES

AN INDIAN BOY

BOTTOM, the Weaver

QUINCE, the Carpenter

SNUG, the Joiner

FLUTE, the Bellows-mender

SNOUT, the Tinker

STARVELING, the Tailor

A DRUNKEN POET

NIGHT - MYSTERY

SECRECY - SLEEP

NYMPHS

CORIDON and MOPSA, a couple of haymakers

SPRING - SUMMER - AUTUMN - WINTER

JUNO, a Nymph (Goddess of Nature)

CHINESE MEN AND WOMEN

HYMEN, God of Marriage

CD 1

First Musick

1 1. Prelude

2 2. Hornpipe

Second Musick

3 3. Air

4 4. Rondeau

5 5. Overture

ACT ONE

6 6. DUET SOPRANO, BASS

Come, come, come let us leave the town,

And in some lonely place

Where crowds and noise were never known

Resolve to spend our days.

In pleasant shades upon the grass

At night ourselves we'll lay;

Our days in harmless sport shall pass,

Thus time shall slide away.

*Enter Fairies, leading in three Drunken Poets.
One of them is blind[fold]ed.*

7 7. SCENE OF THE DRUNKEN POET
BLIND POET. FAIRIES

BLIND POET

Fill up the bowl then, fill up the bowl then . . .

FIRST FAIRY and CHORUS

Trip it, trip it in a ring,
Around this mortal dance and sing.

POET

Enough, enough;
We must play at blindman's buff.
Turn me round and stand away.
I'll catch whom I may.

SECOND FAIRY and CHORUS

About him go, so, so, so,
Pinch the wretch from top to toe;
Pinch him forty, forty times,
Pinch till he confess his crimes.

POET

Hold, you damned tormenting punk,
I confess . . .

FAIRIES

What, what?

POET

I'm drunk as I live boys, drunk.

FAIRIES

What art thou, speak?

POET

If you will know it,
I am a scurvy poet.

CHORUS

Pinch him, pinch him for his crimes,
His nonsense and his dogrel rhymes.

POET

Hold! oh! oh! oh!

FAIRIES

Confess more, more!

POET

I confess I'm very poor.
Nay, prithee do not pinch me so,
Good dear Devil, let me go;
And as I hope to wear the bays
I'll write a sonnet in thy praise.

CHORUS

Drive 'em hence away, away;
Let 'em sleep till break of day.

8 8. *First Act Tune: Jig*

ACT TWO

9. TENOR SOLO

Come all ye songsters of the sky,
Wake and assemble in this wood;
But no ill-boding bird be nigh,
None but the harmless and the good.

10. Prelude

11. CHORUS

May the God of Wit inspire
The Sacred Nine to bear a part;
And the blessed heavenly choir
Show the utmost of their art;
While Echo shall in sounds remote
Repeat each note, each note . . .

12. Echo

12. CHORUS

Now join your warbling voices all.

SOPRANO SOLO. CHORUS

Sing while we trip it upon the green;
But no ill vapours rise or fall,
Nothing offend our Fairy Queen.

Dance of Fairies

Titania lies down and orders them to sing her to sleep.

ENTRANCE OF NIGHT, MYSTERY, SECRECY AND SLEEP AND THEIR ATTENDANTS

13. NIGHT

See, even Night herself is here
To favour your design;
And all her peaceful train is near,
That men to sleep incline.
Let noise and care,
Doubt and despair,
Envy and spite
(The fiend's delight)
Be ever banished hence;
Let soft repose
Her eyelids close,
And murmuring streams
Bring pleasing dreams;
Let nothing stay to give offence.

14. MYSTERY

I am come to lock all fast,
Love without me cannot last;
Love, like counsels of the wise,
Must be hid from vulgar eyes.
'Tis holy and we must conceal it;
They profane it who reveal it.

15. SECRECY

One charming night
Gives more delight
Than a hundred lucky days.

Night and I improve the taste,
Make the pleasure longer last
A thousand several ways.

16 17. SLEEP, CHORUS

Hush, no more, be silent all;
Sweet repose has closed her eyes,
Soft as feathered snow does fall.
Softly, softly steal from hence.
No noise disturb her sleeping sense.

17 18. *Dance for the followers of Night*

18 19. *Second Act Tune: Air*

ACT THREE

19 20. SOPRANO SOLO

If love's a sweet passion, why does it torment?
If a bitter, oh tell me whence comes my torment?
Since I suffer with pleasure, why should
I complain,
Or grieve at my fate when I know 'tis in vain?
Yet so pleasing the pain is, so soft is the dart
That at once it both wounds me and tickles
my heart.

CHORUS

I press her hand gently, look languishing down,
And by passionate silence I make my love known.
But oh! how I'm blest when so kind she does
prove

By willing mistake to discover her love.
When, in striving to hide, she reveals all her
flame,
And our eyes tell each other what neither dares
name.

20 21. *Symphony while the swans come forward*

21 22. *Dance for the Fairies*

22 23. *Dance for the Green Men*

23 24. SOPRANO SOLO

Ye gentle spirits of the air, appear!
Prepare, and join your tender voices here.
Catch and repeat the trembling sounds anew,
Soft as her sighs and sweet as pearly dew;
Run new divisions, and such measures keep
As when you lull the God of Love asleep.

Enter a couple of haymakers, Coridon and Mopsa.

24 25. DIALOGUE BETWEEN CORIDON AND MOPSA

CORIDON

Now the maids and the men are making of hay,
We've left the dull fools and are stolen away.
Then Mopsa, no more
Be coy as before,
But let's merrily, merrily play
And kiss and kiss the sweet time away.

MOPSA
Why, how now Sir Clown,
What makes you bold?
I'd have ye to know
I'm not made of that mold.
I tell you again:
Maids must never kiss no men.
No, no, no, no, no, no kissing at all;
I'll not kiss till I kiss you for good and all.

CORIDON
Not kiss you at all?

MOPSA
Not kiss, till you kiss me for good and all.

CORIDON
Should you give me a score
'Twould not lessen your store,
Then bid me cheerfully kiss
And take my fill of your bliss.

MOPSA
I'll not trust you so far, I know you too well;
Should I give you an inch you'd soon take an ell.
Then lordlike you rule, and laugh at the fool.

CORIDON
So small a request,
You must not, you cannot, you shall not deny,
Nor will I admit of another reply.

MOPSA
Nay, what do you mean? Oh, fie, fie, fie, fie!

CORIDON
You must not, you cannot, you shall not deny.

25 26. A NYMPH

When I have often heard young maids
complaining
That when men promise most they most deceive,
Then I thought none of them worthy my gaining,
And what they swore resolved ne'er to believe.

But when so humbly he made his addresses,
With looks so soft and with language so kind,
I thought it sin to refuse his caresses;
Nature o'ercame, and I soon changed my mind.

Should he employ all his wit in deceiving,
Stretch his invention and artfully feign,
I find such charms, such true joy in believing,
I'll have the pleasure, let him have the pain.

If he proves perjured, I shall not be cheated,
He may deceive himself but never me;
'Tis what I look for, and shan't be defeated,
For I'll be as false and inconstant as he.

26 27. *Dance for the Haymakers*

- 27 28. ALTO SOLO, CHORUS
A thousand, thousand ways we'll find
To entertain the hours;
No two shall e'er be known so kind,
No life so blest as ours.

*After this happy entertainment Titania takes
Bottom to sleep.*

- 28 29. *Third Act Tune: Hornpipe.*

CD 2

ACT FOUR

- 1 30. *Symphony*

Enter the four Seasons and their Attendants.

- 2 31. AN ATTENDANT, CHORUS
Now the night is chased way,
All salute the rising sun;
'Tis that happy, happy day,
The birthday of King Oberon.

32. DUET

Let the fifes and the clarions and shrill trumpets
sound,
And the arch of high heaven the clangour
resound.

- 3 33. *Entry of Phoebus*

- 4 34. PHOEBUS
When a cruel long winter has frozen the earth,
And Nature imprisoned seeks in vain to be free,
I dart forth my beams to give all things a birth,
Making spring for the plants, every flower and
each tree.

'Tis I who give life, warmth and vigour to all;
Even Love who rules all things in earth, air
and sea
Would languish and fade, and to nothing
would fall;
The world to its chaos would return but for me.

35. CHORUS

Hail! Great parent of us all,
Light and comfort of the earth;
Before thy shrine the Seasons fall,
Thou who giv'st all Nature birth.

- 5 36. SPRING

Thus the ever grateful Spring
Does her yearly tribute bring;
All your sweets before him lay,
Then round his altar sing and play.

- 6 37. SUMMER

Here's the Summer, sprightly gay,
Smiling, wanton, fresh and fair,
Adorned with all the flowers of May
Whose various sweets perfume the air.

7 38. AUTUMN
See my many coloured fields
And loaded trees my will obey;
All the fruit that Autumn yields
I offer to the God of Day.

8 39. WINTER
Next Winter comes slowly, pale, meagre and old,
First trembling with age and then quivering
with cold;
Benumbed with hard frosts and with snow
covered o'er,
Prays the sun to restore him, and sings as before:

CHORUS

Hail! Great parent of us all,
Light and comfort of the earth;
Before thy shrine the Seasons fall,
Thou who giv'st all Nature birth.

9 40. *Fourth Act Tune: Air*

ACT FIVE

10 41. *Prelude*

While a symphony plays Juno appears in a machine.

11 42. JUNO
Thrice happy lovers, may you be for ever, ever free
From that tormenting devil, Jealousy;
From all that anxious care and strife
That attends a married life;

Be to one another true,
Kind to her as she to you,
And since the errors of this night are past,
May he be ever constant, she for ever chaste.

12 43. THE PLAINT
O let me ever, ever weep,
My eyes no more shall welcome sleep;
I'll hide me from the sight of the day
And sigh and sigh my soul away.
He's gone, he's gone, his loss deplore;
For I shall never see him more.

Enter Chinese women and men

13 44. *Entry Dance*

14 45. *Symphony*

15 46. A CHINESE MAN
Thus, thus the gloomy world
At first began to shine,
And from the power divine
A glory round about it hurled,
Which made it bright
And gave it birth in light.

Then were all minds as pure
As those ethereal streams,
In innocence secure,
Not subject to extremes.
There was no room for empty fame,
No cause for pride, ambition wanted aim.

16 47. A CHINESE WOMAN

Thus happy and free,
Thus treated are we
With Nature's chiefest delights;
We never cloy,
But renew our joy,
And one bliss another invites;

CHORUS

Thus wildly we live,
Thus freely we give
What Heaven as freely bestows.
We were not made
For labour and trade,
Which fools on each other impose.

17 48. CHINESE MAN

Yes, Daphne, in your looks I find
The charms by which my heart's betrayed;
Then let not your disdain unbind
The prisoner that your eyes have made.
She that in love makes least defence
Wounds ever with the surest dart;
Beauty may captivate the sense
But kindness only gains the heart.

Six monkeys suddenly appear from behind the trees and dance.

18 49. *Monkeys' Dance*

19 50. A CHINESE WOMAN

Hark! how all things with one sound rejoice,
And the world seems to have one voice.

20 51. A CHINESE WOMAN

Hark! the echoing air a triumph sings,
And all around pleased Cupids clap their wings.

CHORUS

Hark! Hark!

21 52. TWO CHINESE WOMEN

Sure the dull God of Marriage does not hear;
We'll rouse him with a charm.
Hymen, appear!

CHORUS

Hymen, appear!

CHINESE WOMEN and CHORUS

Our Queen of Night commands you not to stay.
Appear, appear!

Enter Hymen

22 53. *Prelude*

54. HYMEN

See, see I obey.
My torch has long been out. I hate
On loose dissembled vows to wait,
Where hardly love outlives the wedding night;
False flames, love's meteors, yield my torch no light.

23 55. TWO CHINESE WOMEN

Turn then thine eyes upon those glories here,
And catching flames will on thy torch appear.

24 56. HYMEN
My torch indeed will from such brightness
shine;
Love ne'er had yet such altars so divine.

25 57. TWO CHINESE WOMEN and HYMEN,
CHORUS
They shall be as happy as they're fair;
Love shall fill all the places of care.
And every time the sun shall display
His rising light,
It shall be to them a new wedding day,
And when he sets, a new nuptial night.

Chinese woman and man dance

26 58. Chaconne

27 59. CHORUS
They shall be as happy . . .

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Titania caressant la tête d'âne de Bottom, 1793-94

(Shakespeare, "Songe d'une nuit d'été")

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